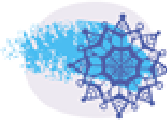


# SPECIAL EDITION

## COUNTY LINES



JANUARY  
2005

The reason for this Special Edition is to provide some feedback on the responses to countywide issues found in the

### ***#1 most asked questions about these little wooden boxes:***

Who reads them and what do they do with them?

Commissioners' staff collects the suggestions periodically—our goal is once per month. We log each comment in an electronic file, stored in a shared Commissioners folder, hence providing easy access for Commissioners to view.

If a comment or suggestion is not considered a "countywide" issue, but rather pertains to a specific department (for example, "Get Ross a new car"), then we forward those on to the related department head.

Note: Comments aimed at particular individuals, or of a personal nature, are forwarded to the appropriate department head, but will not be aired in a public forum.

Suggestion Boxes — this is only a sample of the nearly 50 comments received in a 5-month period.

In no particular order or preference...

COMMENT: Some time back you were looking for suggestions to name the 629 building. Since there has been no announcement, I suspect no name was discovered. I would like to suggest that the 629 building be officially named either the Court House Annex or the County Office Building Annex. Officially change the name of the TCOB from Court House Annex to the Tippecanoe County Office Building. That's what everyone calls it anyway.

RESPONSE: A new sign was installed at the 629 building without an official name, other than "Tippecanoe County Offices at 629 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street". Most of us continue to refer to it as "629" or "629 building" as you did. We refer to TCOB as TCOB and the courthouse as the courthouse. None of us like the term "Annex"—but we obviously didn't convey that to the parking garage architect before they printed the signs!

COMMENT: I was under the impression that our insurance cost were not going up this year and that was why we are only receiving a 2% raise. Now with the cost of insurance, many of us are only getting a 1% raise.

RESPONSE: We realize the impact rising costs have on yearly cost of living adjustments. Under tight budget constraints, such as the past several years, it has been doubtful at times whether 1% raise is even feasible. In an effort to get insurance renewals on a calendar year basis, sometimes the planning and negotiating happens after the budget process. The chart below shows the County's annual contribution toward each plan. For example, the County pays 98.3% of the total cost for a single employee on



Plan C. The County pays 71.9% of the total cost for an employee and their family on Plan A.

	Plan A	Plan B	Plan C
Employee	90.4%	95.8%	98.3%
Employee/Spouse	80.1%	84.3%	87.6%
Employee/Children	81.8%	86.2%	88.9%
Employee/Family	71.9%	75.3%	79.0%

---

COMMENT: My suggestion is that we get our birthdays off, just like the city employees.

RESPONSE: Granting an employee their birthday off might be a possibility. We would like department head input before a decision is made. Or another thought... sick days, vacation days, holidays are all confusing and cause bookkeeping headaches. Perhaps a paid-time-off scheme, where employees get a certain number of days off and can use them as they see fit, could be implemented to everyone's benefit. Let your department head know your thoughts on this (or put your comments in the suggestion box!).

---

COMMENT: Check this out....extend state employees health plans to local units of government.

RESPONSE: It's possible for local governmental units to participate in the State employee health plan. We have looked into that. We chose not to participate because the premiums were 5-6 times our current premiums. There was concern regarding how claims data would be compiled, distributed and whether the data would be unusable should the County decide to leave the State plan and do something else.

---

COMMENT: Wouldn't our large base of county employees (not to mention the public) be better served if HR staggered lunches?

RESPONSE: HR employees do stagger their lunch hours as much as possible. This was not an issue when HR was located in the Commissioners office and certainly fell on the list of drawbacks when discussing "the move" down the hall. As compared to other similar counties, our HR is understaffed: Elkhart—5, Hamilton Co.—2, Allen Co—6, Vanderburgh—4. Hopefully we can implement the use of on-line forms and applications soon. For employment opportunities, please visit [www.county.tippecanoe.in.us](http://www.county.tippecanoe.in.us). And if all else fails, the Commissioners' office is always open for assistance.

---

COMMENT: Set Time Clocks and Court House Clocks the Same.

RESPONSE: We continually notice how all of our clocks and watches read different times. This needs continual monitoring, but we agree, for figuring payroll time clocks need to be accurate.

---

COMMENT: Vending machine on 5<sup>th</sup> floor—why only one choice for nondiet drink? Why \$.60? Places like Lafayette Police is .45 and at Wells it is .50! Are we paying strictly for convenience?!

RESPONSE: Hopefully this response will answer several VENDING questions. A couple of years ago we investigated the possibility of 1) changing our vending vendor, 2) offering fountain drinks w/ice dispenser, and 3) changing locations of vending machines. What we ran into is the Randolph-Sheppard Act, 20 U.S.C. 107; IC 12-12-5-1, which (in a nutshell) gives exclusive right to the State (through its vending program and subcontractors) to vending opportunities in buildings owned, leased in whole, or operated by: the state, a county, a township, a city, or a town for purposes of providing blind individuals with employment. Why then is the City Police Dept currently not under the same contract as the County? Well, we've proposed that question to the State, and apparently (due to lack of response) we assume that decision is based on the subcontractor's willingness and ability to pursue the additional business. Why have we been targeted? Probably because that is the way it has always been. What can we do about it? Perhaps follow the laws of supply and demand. The vendor will only supply or replenish what is being purchased; otherwise, the vendor should change the product line or drop prices.

---

COMMENT: Rainy Day Fund—use for flowers or when someone needs help for time off.

RESPONSE: Probably not a likely use of the Rainy Day Fund, but we know what you mean. So many of us reach into our own pockets to pay for employee rewards or giving for someone in need. It really starts to add up quickly! While we'd like to have a pot of money (some organizations use vending machine proceeds!—see above) for these types of expenses, we are accountable to the public for their tax dollars and such things generally aren't accepted as proper or ethical practices (in government that is). On a positive note, we should all be thankful for those who give of their time and \$ in the face of triumph or tragedy. So thank you.

---

COMMENT: I think it would be nice to have a reward system for employees that do a good job, not call in sick much, and take on extra tasks. I feel that it could be anything from a pen, nice folder, or messenger bag with the county logo on it. I think this could help boost productivity and morale.

RESPONSE: We agree! Unfortunately, the State Board of Accounts won't accept small rewards as a valid tax expense. We hope the merit pay bonus, though small, can fill some of this need for recognizing an extraordinary employee. We encourage department heads to use positive comments, "employee of the week", or other non-cost methods to give those well-deserved pats

on the back. And, on occasion, we understand that a favorite style pen may make the difference between 12 used sick days or just 1 for that nasty flu!

---

COMMENT: Why don't we go back to every other Friday paychecks? It would make it easier for paying bills.

RESPONSE: There is a reduction of cost to produce 24 pays versus 26 pays--time, paper, equipment, etc. per year. Semi-monthly eliminates the 27th pay issue approximately every seven years under bi-weekly pay. Some companies these days are willing to change due dates to correspond with paydays.

---

COMMENT: Seek outside bids for health insurance. Self insurance costs more with the only benefit being guaranteed insurability, which is a minor issue to work around. We should seek the greater good of many, not the benefit of a few. If I can be of assistance, please contact me.

RESPONSE: We do seek quotes. However, when quotes have been obtained they equal or exceed our current expense and in some cases provide fewer benefits. Our consultant continuously monitors the market and what's available, and requests quotes officially every other year. Self-insurance, with the benefits we have, is cheaper than other options, as long as we're basically healthy. To keep employees' contributions as affordable as we can, we have been pushed to the choice in plans (with increases in employee share) and more self-responsibilities for coverage (drug choices, pre-certification, etc.). It's a constantly changing and costly industry—but we have confidence in our consultant who recommends plans and changes for us to consider. The company plans to quote our health plan this summer.

---



Thank you for participating. It is not our intent to offend anyone by publishing or responding to comments.

On a final note, even if changes come slower than we'd all like, the suggestion boxes are there for you and your voices are heard.